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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002255

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [KDEM](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: MFA TO MISSIONS: SIEGE ON CONGRESS JUST A PARADE

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary: MFA representatives explained the government's position on recent political developments to Ambassadors from the Americas October 16. The MFA representatives thanked Ambassadors for UNASUR's September 15 declaration, which "forced the opposition to the negotiating table." The MFA representatives maintained that despite best efforts on the part of the government to reach a compromise on the draft constitution's text, opposition prefects (governors) refused to even acknowledge hard-worked gains of the negotiation. The government asserted martial law in Pando Department (state) was justified following a "massacre" against pro-government supporters and explained that prosecutions would move forward for participants in September's "civil prefectural coup." They characterized the large, government-supported march threatening to surround Congress and force passage of a constitutional referendum as a "festive" manifestation. They maintained that the government's agenda had been endorsed by President Evo Morales' 67 percent approval in the August 10 recall vote, seemingly setting the groundwork to justify any extra-legal measures taken against the opposition or institutions that get in the government's way. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs's Director of Bilateral Affairs Jean Paul Guevara and ex-Ambassador to the United States Gustavo Guzman briefed Ambassadors from the Americas on recent domestic political developments on Thursday, October 16 from 10:00 a.m. until almost 12:00 noon. Guevara introduced the meeting as another in the recent round of meetings with foreign diplomatic missions to share perspectives. He noted that the last meeting had taken place following the August 10 recall referendum.

Opposition "Coup" Required Government Response  
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¶3. (C) Guevara outlined political developments since the August 10 referendum. He characterized opposition actions during this period as a civic prefectural coup, implying the "coup" was led by civic committee leaders and prefects (governors) in opposition departments (states). Developments included in Guevara's narrative:

August 15 ) Government authorities (President Evo Morales)

were blocked from visiting four departments.

September 8 ) Seizure of central government institutions and vandalism throughout the Media Luna.

September 10 ) Intentional closing of gas pipeline valves to cause an explosion.

September 11 ) "Massacre" at Porvenir, Pando Department organized by the Pando Prefecture to stop a march of campesinos with 17 deaths and more missing.

All of these actions were designed to stop the process of change. This process of change was supported by two thirds of all Bolivians in the recall referendum (Note: Referring to President Morales' 67 percent approval during August 10 recall referendum, according to official figures. End Note.). The opposition's purpose was to stymie the will of the people as demonstrated by the recall referendum vote.

September 11 ) Government imposes martial law on Pando. (Note: Martial Law was actually imposed late September 12, following the military takeover the Cobija Airport. End Note.)

Talks Continue with Intransigent Opposition

14. (C) According to Guevara, the international community played an important role in bringing the opposition to the negotiating table after this violence. He cited the Rio Group statement and the September 15 UNASUR meeting in Santiago. Guevara highlighted the fact that the UNASUR declaration declared its full support for the democratically elected Morales Government. The declaration further stated that it would not permit the rupture of the democratic regime in Bolivia. This sent a strong message to the opposition that it must negotiate.

15. (C) Ambassador Guzman then described what had happened during the Cochabamba dialogue. He noted that many of the Ambassadors in the room had attended the dialogue in Cochabamba directly. Guzman claimed that the technical teams working on the constitution, autonomy, and related issues were able to reach an agreement in principle on the autonomies issue. Despite the fact the dialogue had achieved a major breakthrough, the Prefects declined to sign a deal. Reaching the agreement in principle on autonomies had taken no less than 150 hours of discussion. There was no agreement on other key issues ) the constitutional referendum, IDH/distribution of hydrocarbon revenue (Guzman explained this was made impossible by the fall in international oil prices and worldwide financial instability), and eight other minor issues.

16. (C) Guzman also briefed on ongoing Congressional conversations aimed at reaching a compromise of the text of the draft constitution. These negotiations hit a glitch yesterday when opposition politicians began to raise issues that had not been raised previously. Despite the problems, negotiations resumed today at 11 a.m. Guzman said there was still time to reach a deal prior to the 4 p.m. congressional session. (Note: This session was postponed until 3 p.m. October 17 and then again to the morning of October 18. End Note.) Guzman emphasized that the GOB would only agree to limited changes in the constitutional text.

17. (C) In response to a question from the Mexican Ambassador, Guevara told the group that six specific external groups were observing the negotiations in the Bolivian Congress: the UN, the EU troika, an OAS representative (Ricardo Lago from Uruguay), the UNASUR delegate Valdez, and the catholic and evangelical churches. Guzman said external observers told him they were pleased with the atmosphere of the talks, but had some concerns about the march. Guzman noted that at one point Morales had referred to the participation by the external observers as a "cerco moral."

## Justifying "Festive" Siege on Congress

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¶18. (C) Guevara concluded by saying that the opposition was politically defeated. It has no choice but to accept the new constitution with limited changes. He emphasized that the march coming into the city on October 20 is a peaceful, festive march; it is meant to pressure Congress, but he hoped that no violence will occur. The indigenous participating in the march are merely expressing their communal solidarity with the new constitution. Following concerns about the march voiced by the Costa Rican Ambassador, Guevara and Guzman once again reassured the group that the marchers were coming in a festive mood and that this was a communal way to express their views. They likened it to the Gran Poder, an annual parade of dancers.

## Media Luna Violence Will be Prosecuted

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¶19. (C) Guevara asserted the Bolivian government will continue to prosecute people involved in the media luna violence. This is a separate matter divorced from political developments being carried on by a separate power of the state ) the judiciary. There will be no impunity.

Comment:

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¶10. (C) Ambassadors were cordial, but pushed back on the official line that the march was nothing more than a

"parade." International observers are being used by the government to sanction Morales Administration actions, not in a constructive way to help bridge the gap between the government and opposition. It appears the international community is starting to pick up on this. The British DCM told us international observers are getting tired of attending negotiations without any ability to comment on them. End Comment.

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